



Langley old-timers refer to unauthorized testing as "bootlegging." Some of their stories about bootlegged tests are apocryphal, however.

According to one of these tall tales, a group of employees wondered out loud during a lunchroom conversation in 1932 about the aerodynamic characteristics of some of the birds that flew over Langley. One of the men who took the subject most seriously, Tom Collier (left), shot a buzzard, and froze it with its wings outstretched for unauthorized testing in the NACA towing tank. The test results indicated that the frozen bird could not fly because it was inherently unstable (birds are, in fact, unstable, but this has never stopped them from flying)! The teller of the tale never mentions, however, that tests of soaring birds in the NACA tank had been proposed by Victor Lougheed of the U.S.

Navy Bureau of Aeronautics. Moreover, in May 1982, the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries had issued a permit for Lougheed "to possess and transport for use in connection with flight investigations, ten sea gulls." At right, one of these gulls is being tested on the carriage of the towing tank.

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Excerpt from *Engineer in Charge*, 1987, by James Hansen. See <http://history.nasa.gov/SP-4305/ch2.htm>, page 38.